Prince Lindworm

Norwegian Folktale

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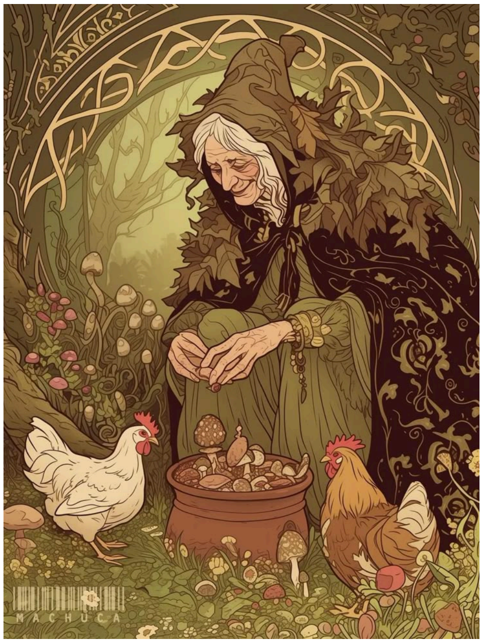
Once upon a time, there was a fine young *King* who was married to the loveliest of Queens. They were exceedingly happy, all but for one thing—they had no children. And this often made them both sad, because the *Queen* wanted a dear little child to play with, and the *King* wanted an heir to the kingdom.

One day the *Queen* went out for a walk by herself, and she met an ugly old woman. The old woman was just like a witch: but she was a nice kind of witch, not the cantankerous sort. She said, "Why do you look so doleful, pretty lady?" "It's no use my telling you," answered the *Queen*, "nobody in the world can help me." "Oh, you never know," said the old woman. "Just you let me hear what your trouble is, and maybe I can put things right."

"My dear woman, how can you?" said the *Queen*: and she told her, "The *King* and I have no children: that's why I am so distressed." "Well, you needn't be," said the old witch. "I can set that right in a twinkling, if only you will do exactly as I tell you. Listen. To-night, at sunset, take a little drinking-cup with two ears" (that is, handles), "and put it bottom upwards on the ground in the north-west corner of your garden. Then go and lift it up to-morrow morning at sunrise, and you will find two roses underneath it, one red and one white. If you eat the red rose, a little boy will be born to you: if you eat the white rose, a little girl will be sent. But, whatever you do, you mustn't eat *both* the roses, or you'll be sorry,—that I warn you! Only one: remember that!" "Thank you a thousand times," said the *Queen*, "this is good news indeed!" And she wanted to give the old woman her gold ring; but the old woman wouldn't take it.



So the *Queen* went home and did as she had been told: and next morning at sunrise she stole out into the garden and lifted up the little drinking-cup. She *was* surprised, for indeed she had hardly expected to see anything. But there were the two roses underneath it, one red and one white. And now she was dreadfully puzzled, for she did not know which to choose. "If I choose the red one," she thought, "and I have a little boy, he may grow up and go to the wars and get killed. But if I choose the white one, and have a little girl, she will stay at home awhile with us, but later on she will get married and go away and leave us. So, whichever it is, we may be left with no child after all."

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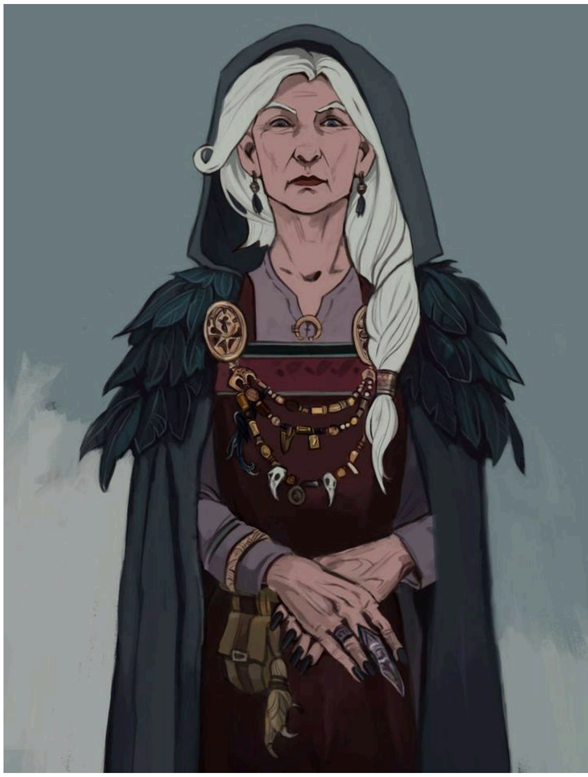
However, at last she decided on the white rose, and she ate it. And it tasted so sweet, that she took and ate the red one too: without ever remembering the old woman's solemn warning.

Some time after this, the *King* went away to the wars: and while he was still away, the *Queen* became the mother of twins. One was a lovely baby-boy, and the other was a *Lindworm*, or Serpent. She was terribly frightened when she saw the *Lindworm*, but he wriggled away out of the room, and nobody seemed to have seen him but herself: so that she thought it must have been a dream. The baby *Prince* was so beautiful and so healthy, the *Queen* was full of joy: and likewise, as you may suppose, was the *King* when he came home and found his son and heir. Not a word was said by anyone about the *Lindworm*: only the *Queen* thought about it now and then.

Many days and years passed by, and the baby grew up into a handsome young *Prince*, and it was time that he got married. The *King* sent him off to visit foreign kingdoms, in the Royal coach, with six white horses, to look for a Princess grand enough to be his wife. But at the very first cross-roads, the way was stopped by an enormous *Lindworm*, enough to frighten the bravest. He lay in the middle of the road with a great wide open mouth, and cried, "A bride for me before a bride for thee!" Then the *Prince* made the coach turn round and try another road: but it was all no use. For, at the first cross-ways, there lay the *Lindworm* again, crying out, "A bride for me before a bride for thee!" So the *Prince* had to turn back home again to the Castle, and give up his visits to the foreign kingdoms. And his mother, the *Queen*, had to confess that what the *Lindworm* said was true. For he was really the eldest of her twins: and so he ought to have a wedding first.

There seemed nothing for it but to find a bride for the *Lindworm*, if his younger brother, the *Prince*, were to be married at all. So the *King* wrote to a distant country, and asked for a Princess to marry his son (but, of course, he didn't say which son), and presently a Princess arrived. But she wasn't allowed to see her bridegroom until he stood by her side in the great hall and was married to her, and then, of course, it was too late for her to say she wouldn't have him. But next morning the Princess had disappeared. The *Lindworm* lay sleeping all alone: and it was quite plain that he had eaten her.

A little while after, the Prince decided that he might now go journeying again in search of a *Princess*. And off he drove in the Royal chariot with the six white horses. But at the first cross-ways, there lay the *Lindworm*, crying with his great wide open mouth, "A bride for me before a bride for thee!" So the carriage tried another road, and the same thing happened, and they had to turn back again this time, just as formerly. And the King wrote to several foreign countries, to know if anyone would marry his son. At last another *Princess* arrived, this time from a very far distant land. And, of course, she was not allowed to see her future husband before the wedding took place,—and then, lo and behold! it was the *Lindworm* who stood at her side. And next morning the Princess had disappeared: and the *Lindworm* lay sleeping all alone; and it was quite clear that he had eaten her.

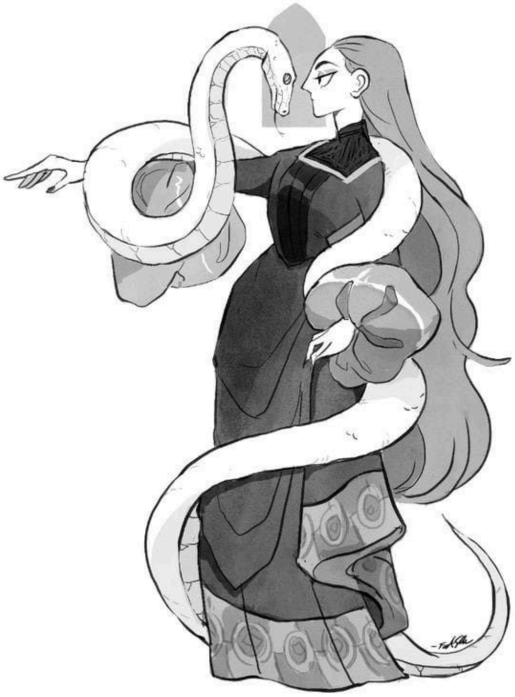


By and by the *Prince* started on his quest for the third time: and at the first cross-roads there lay the *Lindworm* with his great wide open mouth, demanding a bride as before. And the *Prince* went straight back to the castle, and told the *King*: "You must find another bride for my elder brother."

"I don't know where I am to find her," said the *King*, "I have already made enemies of two great Kings who sent their daughters here as brides: and I have no notion how I can obtain a third lady. People are beginning to say strange things, and I am sure no *Princess* will dare to come."

Now, down in a little cottage near a wood, there lived the *King's* shepherd, an old man with his only daughter. And the *King* came one day and said to him, "Will you give me your daughter to marry my son the *Lindworm*? And I will make you rich for the rest of your life."—"No, sire," said the shepherd, "that I cannot do. She is my only child, and I want her to take care of me when I am old. Besides, if the *Lindworm* would not spare two beautiful Princesses, he won't spare her either. He will just gobble her up: and she is much too good for such a fate."

But the *King* wouldn't take "No" for an answer: and at last the old man had to give in.



Well, when the old shepherd told his daughter that she was to be *Prince Lindworm's* bride, she was utterly in despair. She went out into the woods, crying and wringing her hands and bewailing her hard fate. And while she wandered to and fro, an old witch-woman suddenly appeared out of a big hollow oak-tree, and asked her, "Why do you look so doleful, pretty lass?" The shepherd-girl said, "It's no use my telling you, for nobody in the world can help me."—"Oh, you never know," said the old woman. "Just you let me hear what your trouble is, and maybe I can put things right."—"Ah, how can you?" said the girl, "For I am to be married to the *King's* eldest son, who is a *Lindworm*. He has already married two beautiful Princesses, and devoured them: and he will eat me too! No wonder I am distressed."

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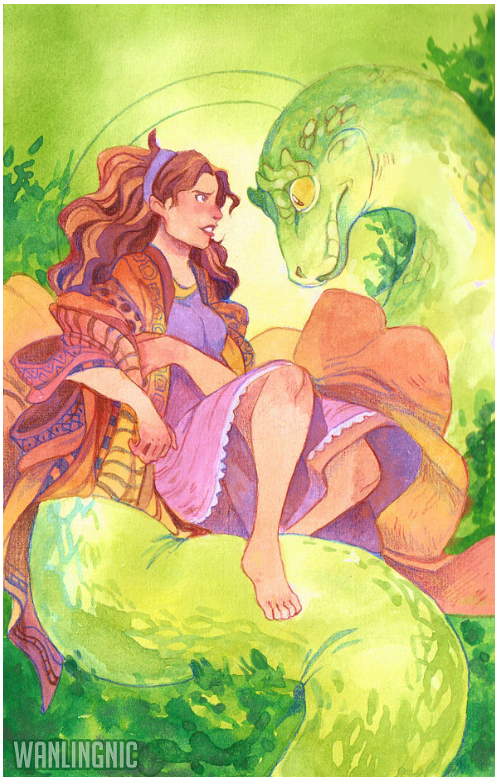
"Well, you needn't be," said the witch-woman. "All that can be set right in a twinkling: if only you will do exactly as I tell you." So the girl said she would.

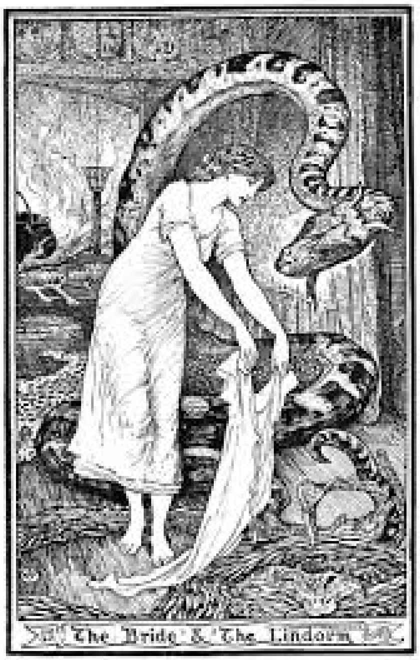


"Listen, then," said the old woman. "After the marriage ceremony is over, and when it is time for you to retire to rest, you must ask to be dressed in ten snow-white shifts. And you must then ask for a tub full of lye," (that is, washing water prepared with wood-ashes) "and a tub full of fresh milk, and as many whips as a boy can carry in his arms,—and have all these brought into your bed-chamber. Then, when the *Lindworm* tells you to shed a shift, do you bid him slough a skin. And when all his skins are off, you must dip the whips in the lye and whip him; next, you must wash him in the fresh milk; and, lastly, you must take him and hold him in your arms, if it's only for one moment."

"The last is the worst notion—ugh!" said the shepherd's daughter, and she shuddered at the thought of holding the cold, slimy, scaly *Lindworm*.

"Do just as I have said, and all will go well," said the old woman. Then she disappeared again in the oak-tree.

When the wedding-day arrived, the girl was fetched in the Royal chariot with the six white horses, and taken to the castle to be decked as a bride. And she asked for ten snow-white shifts to be brought her, and the tub of lye, and the tub of milk, and as many whips as a boy could carry in his arms. The ladies and courtiers in the castle thought, of course, that this was some bit of peasant superstition, all rubbish and nonsense. But the *King* said, "Let her have whatever she asks for." She was then arrayed in the most wonderful robes, and looked the loveliest of brides. She was led to the hall where the wedding ceremony was to take place, and she saw the *Lindworm* for the first time as he came in and stood by her side. So they were married, and a great wedding-feast was held, a banquet fit for the son of a king.



When the feast was over, the bridegroom and bride were conducted to their apartment, with music, and torches, and a great procession. As soon as the door was shut, the *Lindworm* turned to her and said, "Fair maiden, shed a shift!" The shepherd's daughter answered him, "*Prince Lindworm*, slough a skin!"—"No one has ever dared tell me to do that before!" said he.—"But I command you to do it now!" said she. Then he began to moan and wriggle: and in a few minutes a long snake-skin lay upon the floor beside him. The girl drew off her first shift, and spread it on top of the skin.

The *Lindworm* said again to her, "Fair maiden, shed a shift."

The shepherd's daughter answered him, "*Prince Lindworm*, slough a skin."

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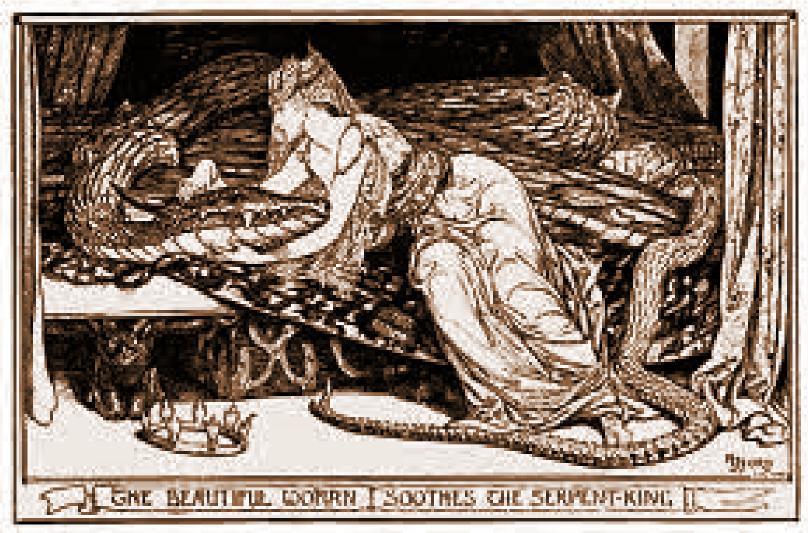
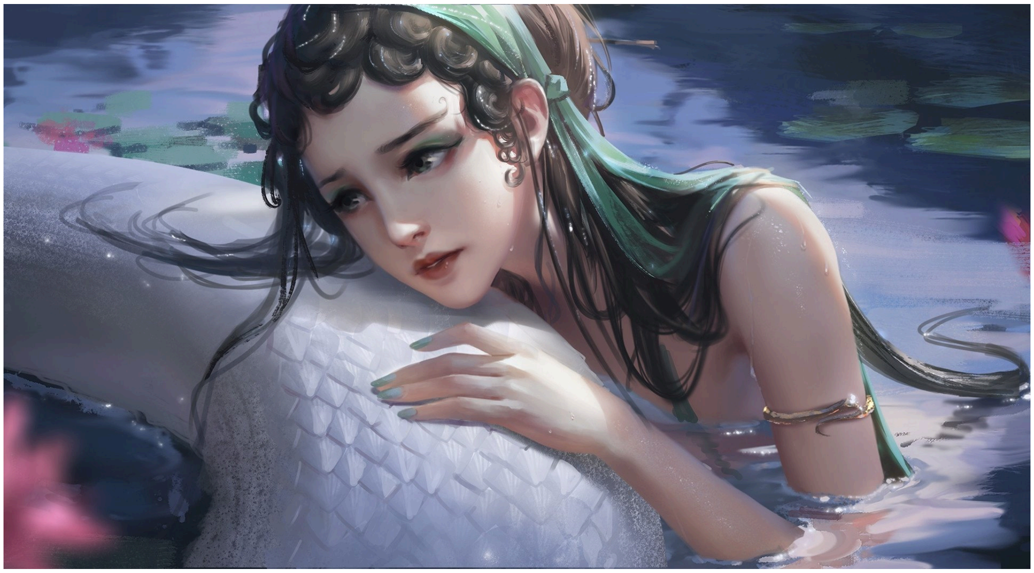
“No one has ever dared tell me to do that before,” said he.—“But I command you to do it now,” said she. Then with groans and moans he cast off the second skin: and she covered it with her second shift. The *Lindworm* said for the third time, “Fair maiden, shed a shift.” The shepherd’s daughter answered him again, “*Prince Lindworm*, slough a skin.”—“No one has ever dared tell me to do that before,” said he, and his little eyes rolled furiously. But the girl was not afraid, and once more she commanded him to do as she bade.


THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN SOOTHES THE SERPENT-KING

And so this went on until nine *Lindworm* skins were lying on the floor, each of them covered with a snow-white shift. And there was nothing left of the *Lindworm* but a huge thick mass, most horrible to see. Then the girl seized the whips, dipped them in the lye, and whipped him as hard as ever she could. Next, she bathed him all over in the fresh milk. Lastly, she dragged him on to the bed and put her arms round him. And she fell fast asleep that very moment.

Next morning very early, the *King* and the courtiers came and peeped in through the keyhole. They wanted to know what had become of the girl, but none of them dared enter the room. However, in the end, growing bolder, they opened the door a tiny bit. And there they saw the girl, all fresh and rosy, and beside her lay—no *Lindworm*, but the handsomest prince that any one could wish to see.

The *King* ran out and fetched the *Queen*: and after that, there were such rejoicings in the castle as never were known before or since. The wedding took place all over again, much finer than the first, with festivals and banquets and merrymakings for days and weeks. No bride was ever so beloved by a King and Queen as this peasant maid from the shepherd’s cottage. There was no end to their love and their kindness towards her: because, by her sense and her calmness and her courage, she had saved their son, *Prince Lindworm*.



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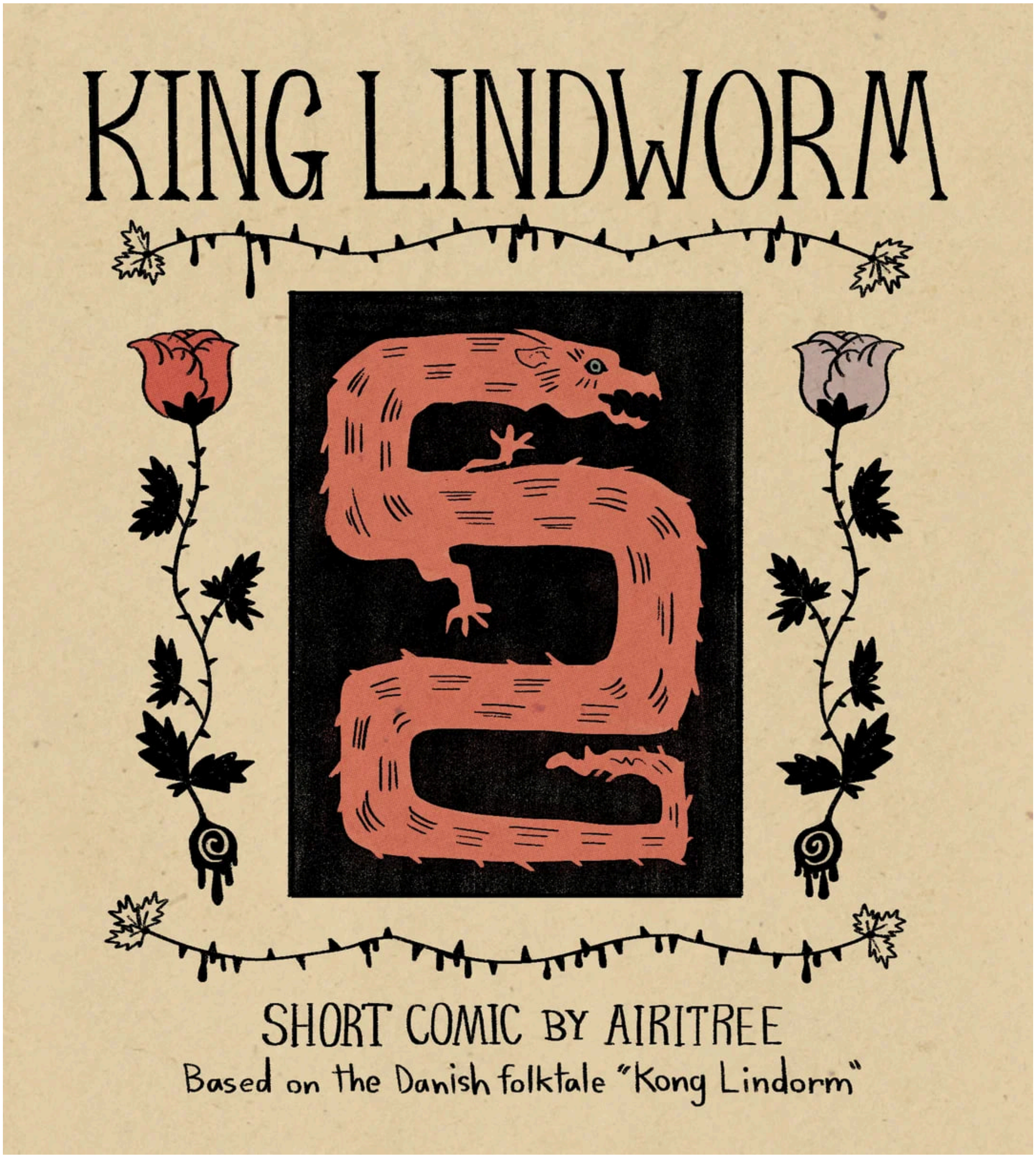
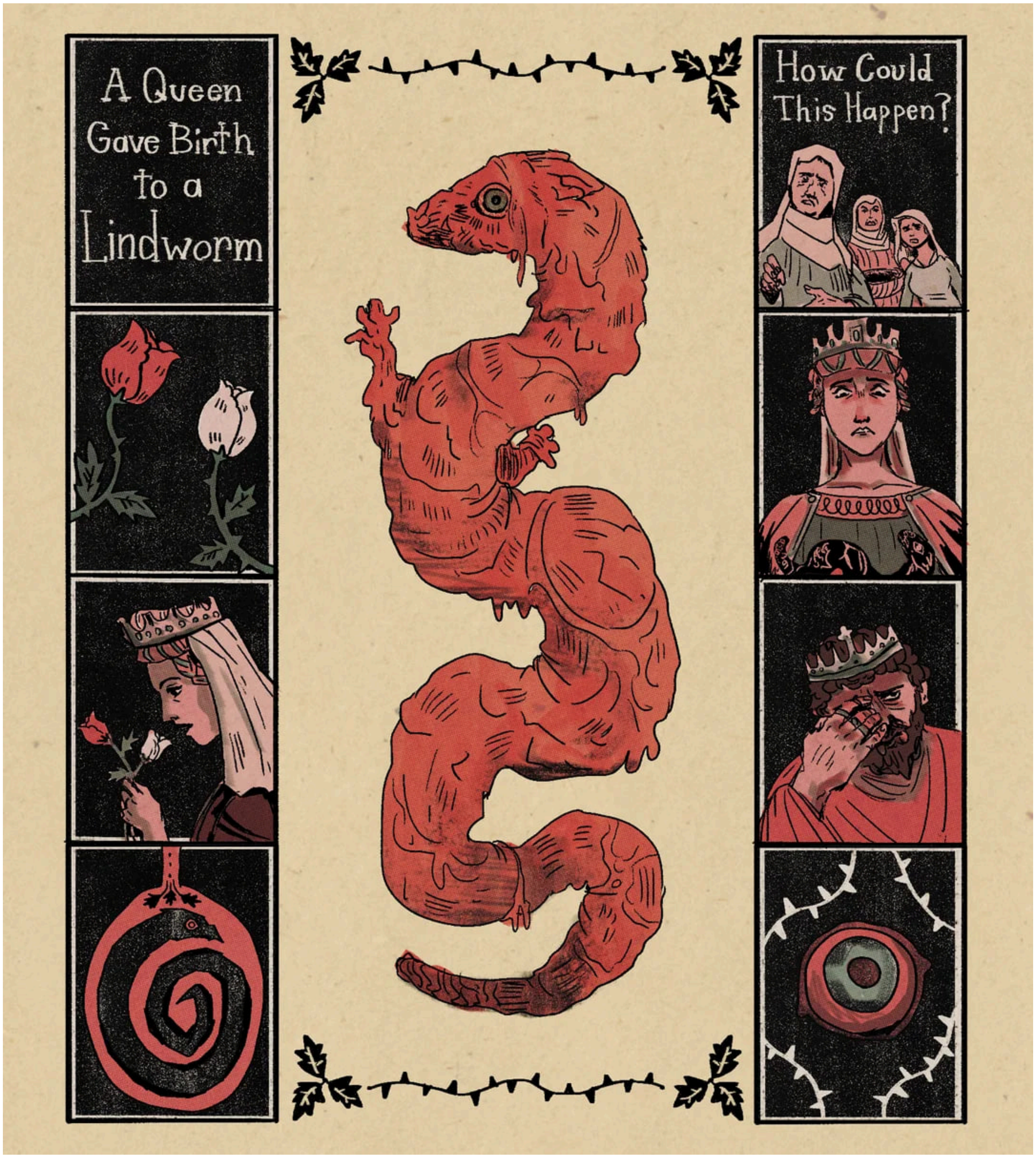

KING LINDWORM
SHORT COMIC BY AIRITREE
Based on the Danish folktale "Kong Lindorm"

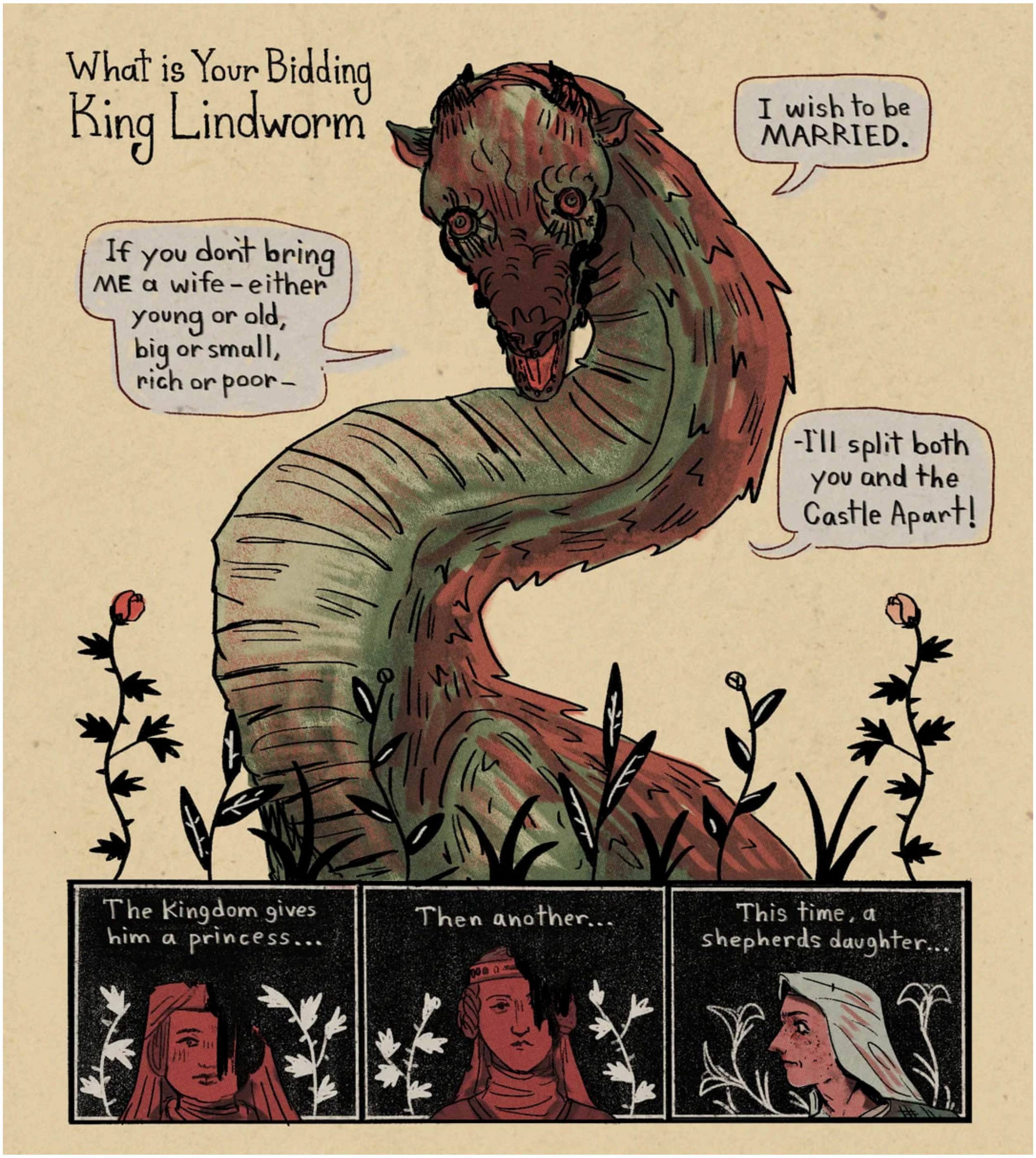
Prince Lindworm

Norwegian Folktale


A Queen Gave Birth to a Lindworm
How Could This Happen?

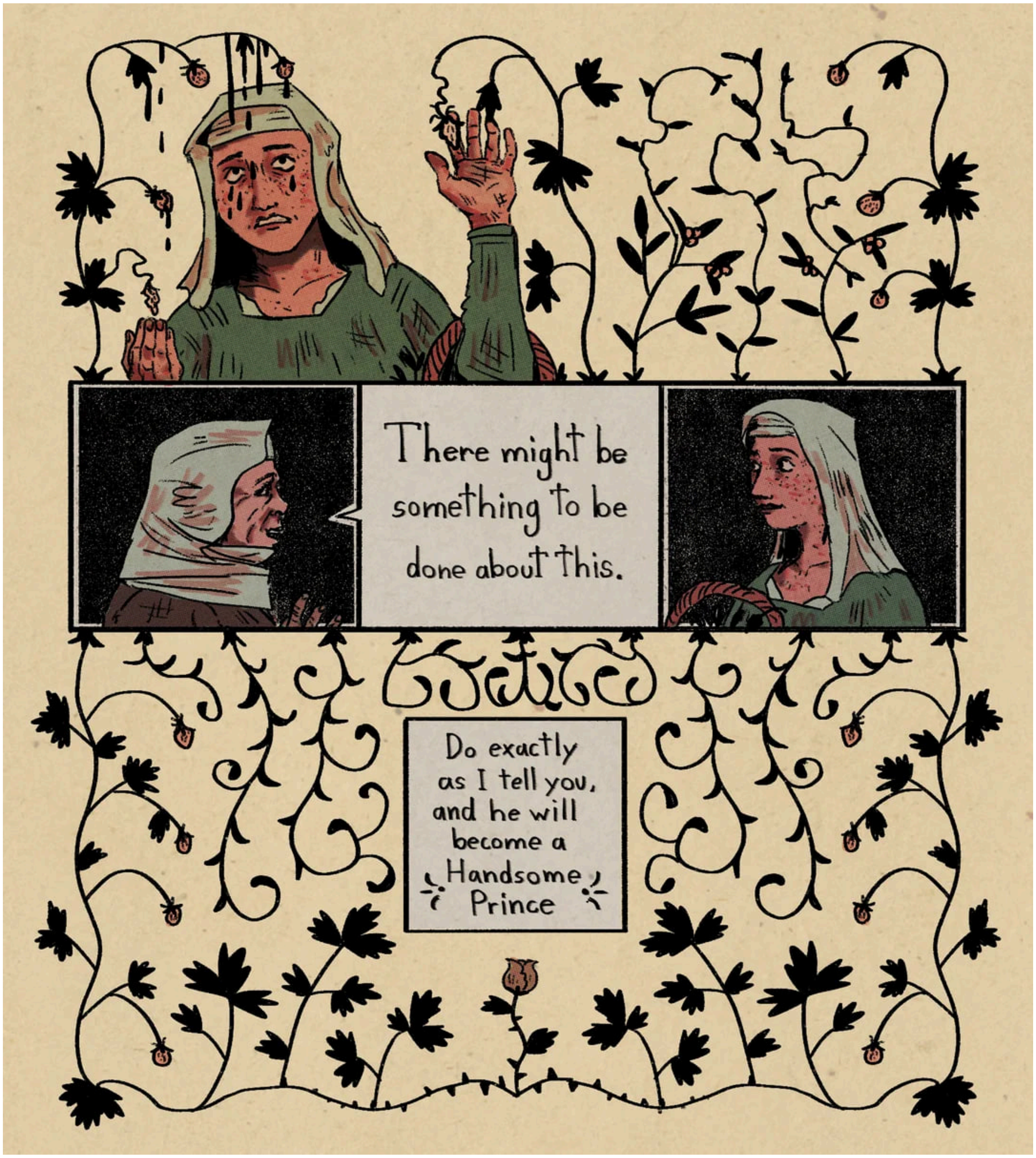
Prince Lindworm

Norwegian Folktale


What is Your Bidding King Lindworm
I wish to be MARRIED.
If you don't bring ME a wife - either young or old, big or small, rich or poor -
-I'll split both you and the Castle Apart!
The Kingdom gives him a princess...
Then another...
This time, a shepherds daughter...

Prince Lindworm

Norwegian Folktale


There might be something to be done about this.
Do exactly as I tell you, and he will become a Handsome Prince

Prince Lindworm

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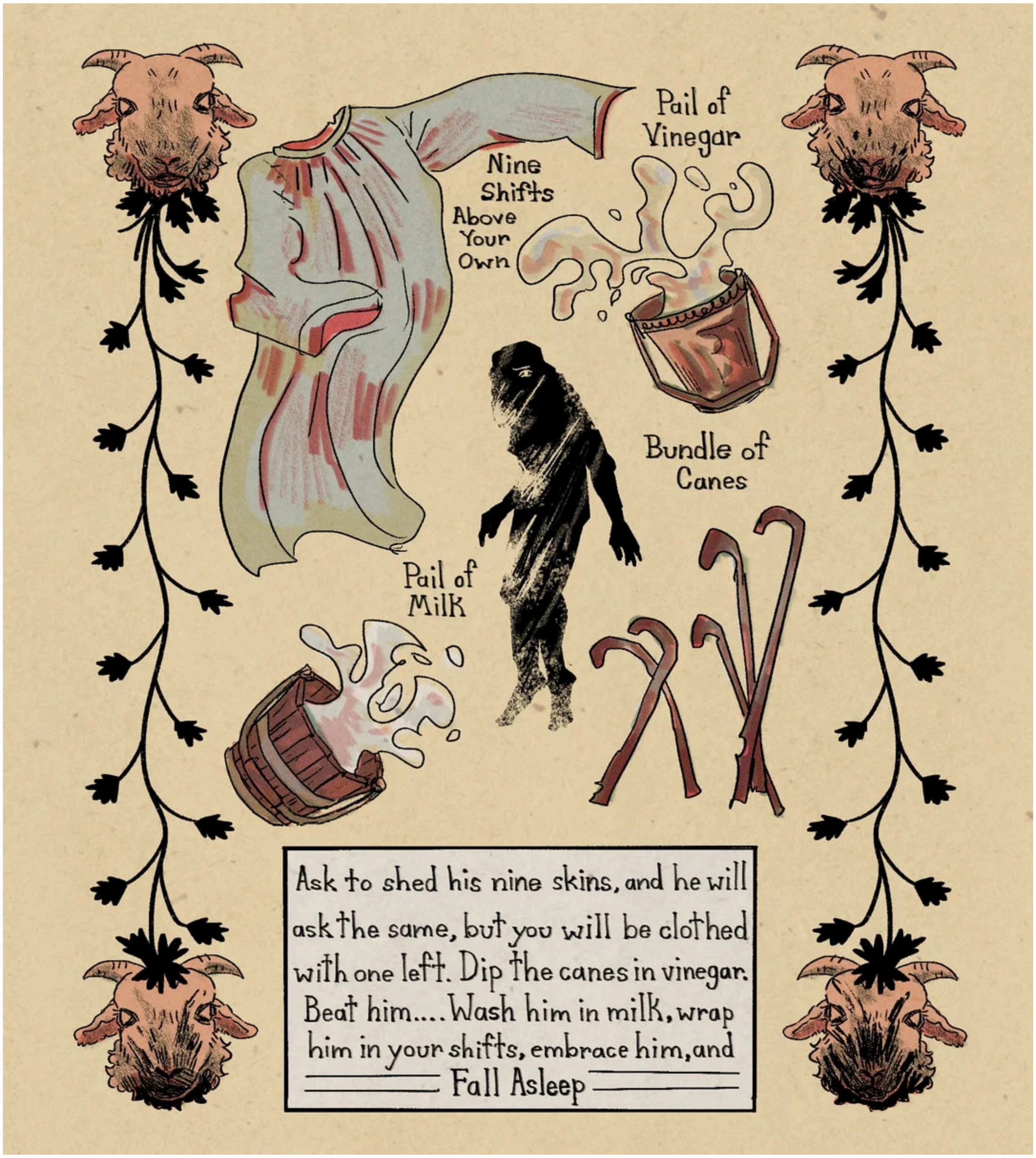
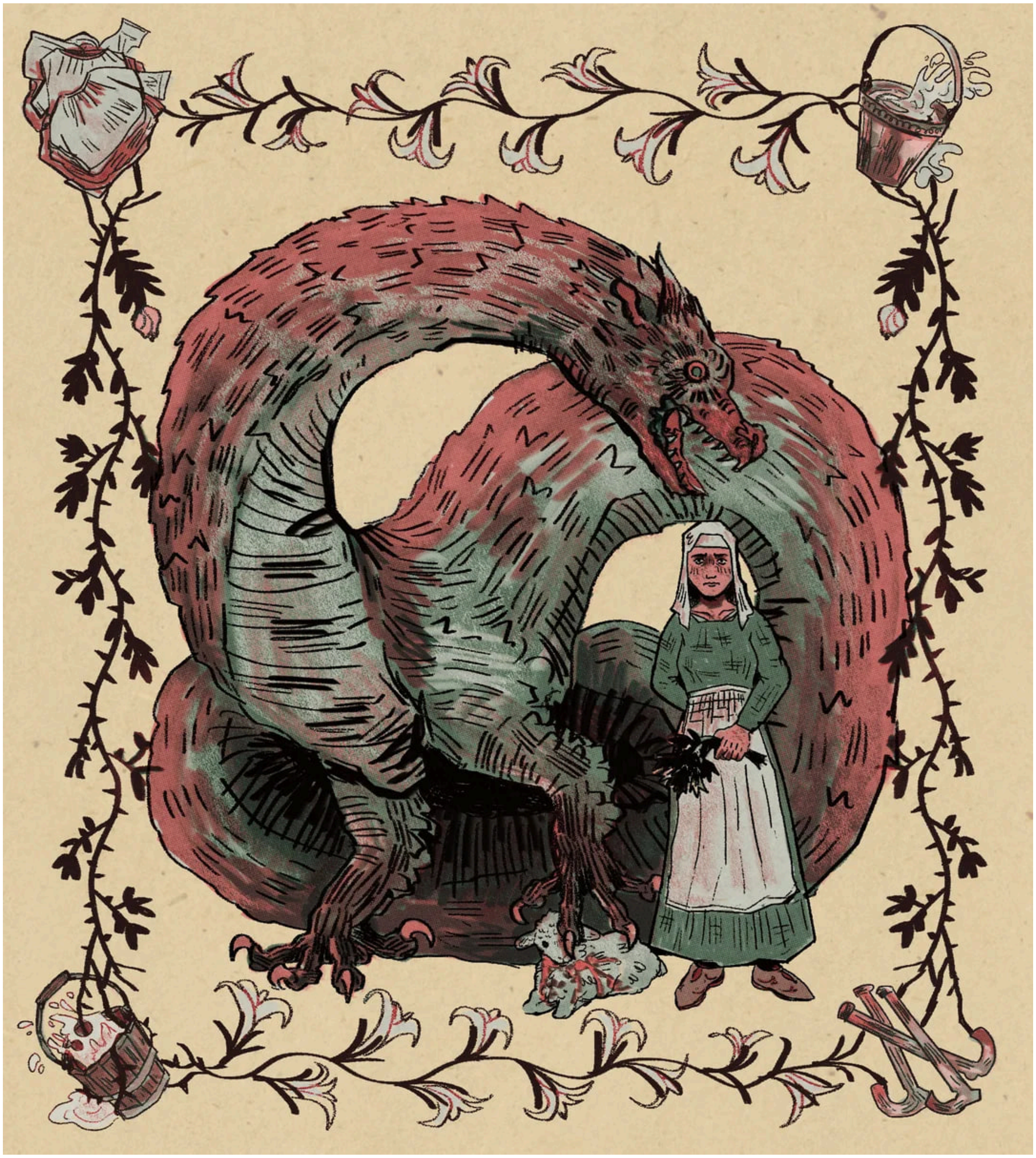

Nine Shifts Above Your Own
Pail of Vinegar
Bundle of Canes
Pail of Milk
Ask to shed his nine skins, and he will ask the same, but you will be clothed with one left. Dip the canes in vinegar. Beat him.... Wash him in milk, wrap him in your shifts, embrace him, and
Fall Asleep

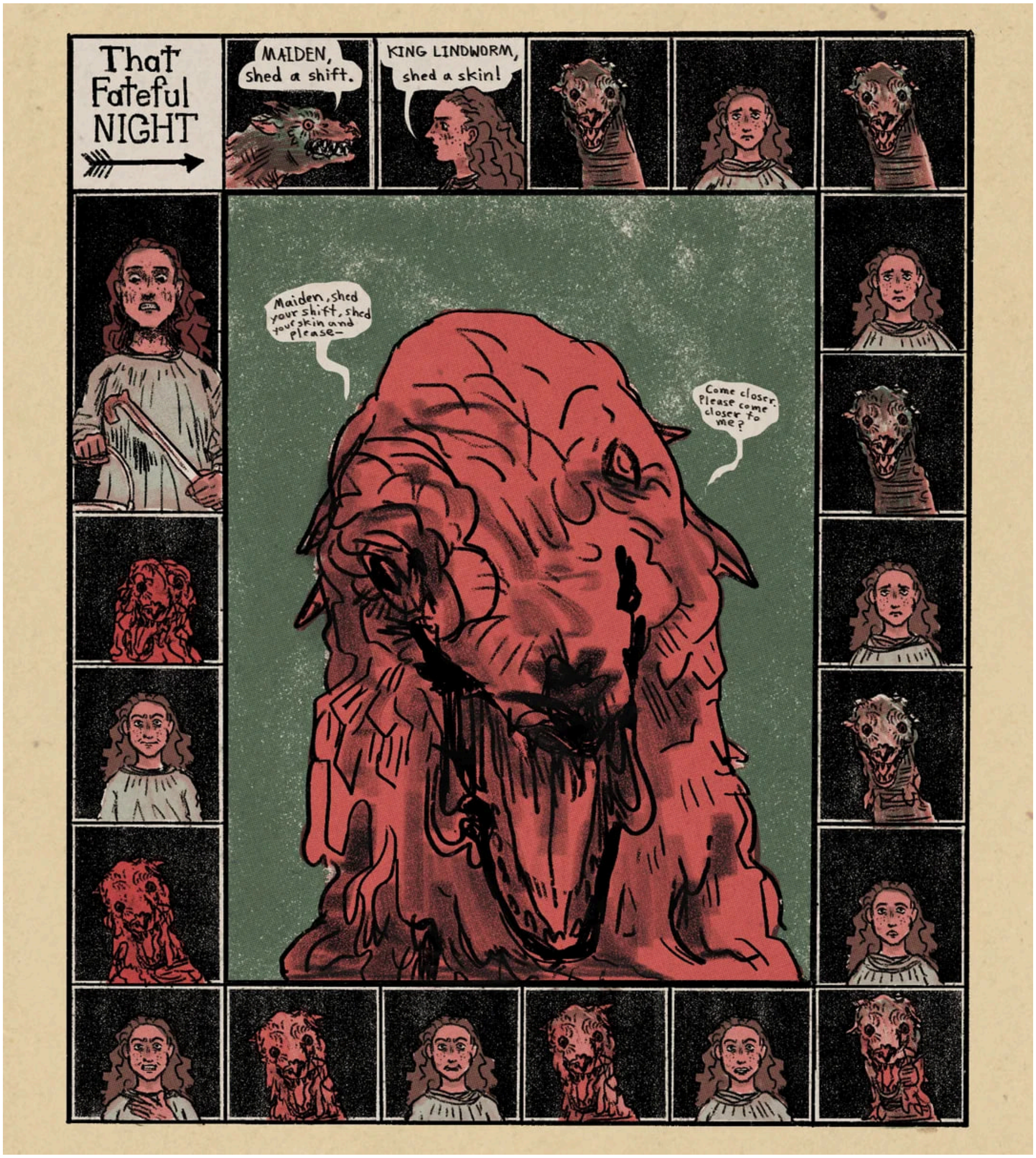
Prince Lindworm

Norwegian Folktale



Prince Lindworm

Norwegian Folktale


That Fateful NIGHT
MAIDEN, shed a shift.
KING LINDWORM, shed a skin!
Maiden, shed your shift, shed your skin and please-
Come closer. Please come closer to me?

Prince Lindworm

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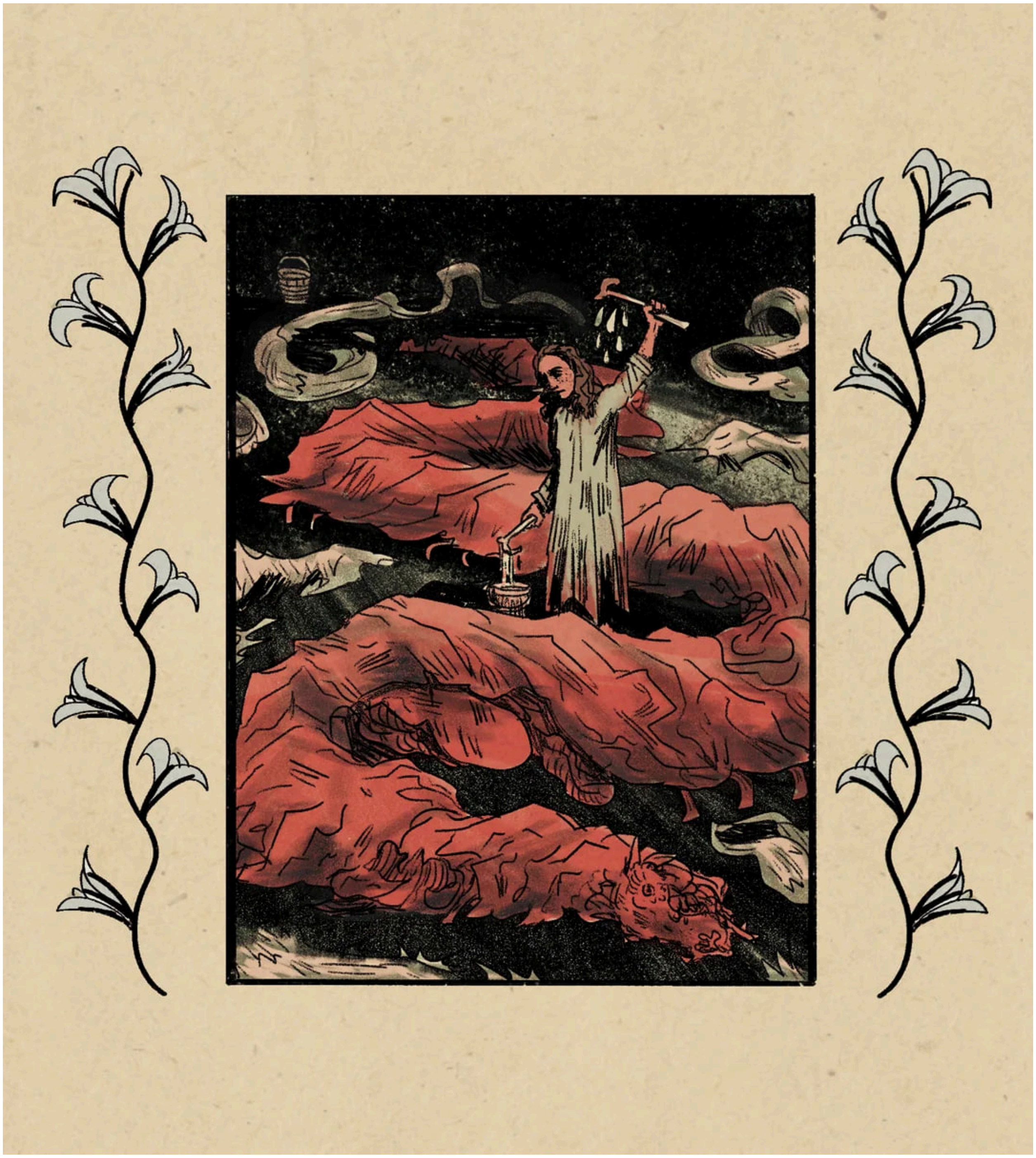

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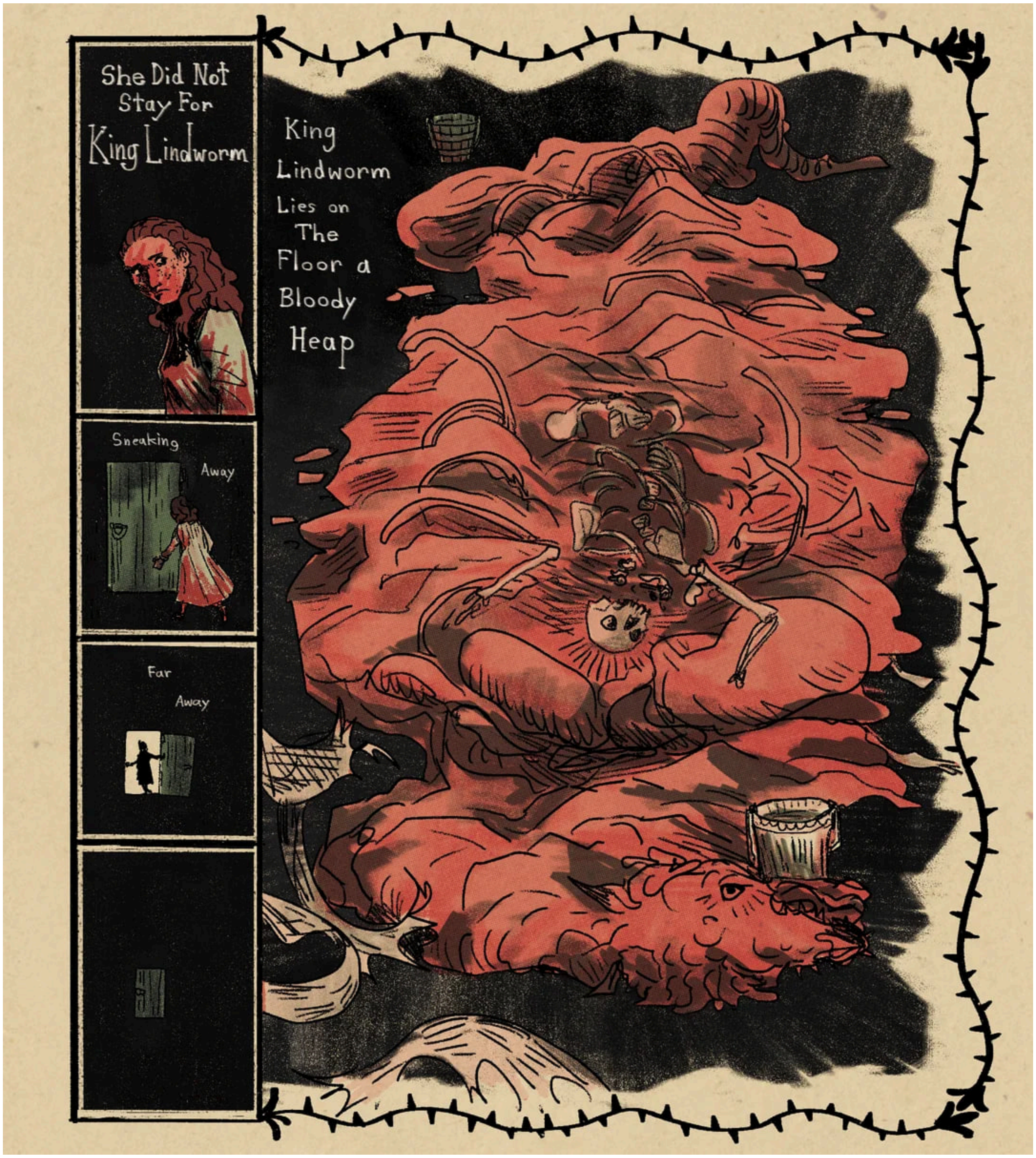
She Did Not Stay For King Lindworm
Sneaking Away
Far Away
King Lindworm Lies on The Floor a Bloody Heap

Prince Lindworm

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